

THE FEDERAL SPOTLIGHT

STAR - 20 JUL 70



Employees' 'Bill of Rights' Draws Administration Fire

ERVIN BILL

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The Nixon administration has registered its opposition to the Senate-approved "bill of rights" for government employees.

As the House Civil Service subcommittee prepared to meet tomorrow in executive session to consider the measure, it received communications opposing the bill from the Civil Service Commission, the Defense Department and other agencies.

Thus, the administration has taken the same stand as the Johnson administration which several years ago managed to have the bill killed in the House after it had been approved by the Senate.

The measure would protect employees against their agencies' snooping into their private lives and against coercing them into contributing to charities, political campaigns, purchasing savings bonds or engaging in any other activities not directly connected with their jobs.

A board of review would be established to which employees could take their cases. They also would have the right to take court action. Also, employees could have representatives attend any meeting with superiors when disciplinary action is threatened.

The Nixon administration objects to the measure on the

grounds that it would jeopardize national security, damage the relationships between supervisors and employees and prevent government agencies from carrying out their responsibilities.

Despite the administration's objections, there still remains a fairly good chance that the House subcommittee will approve the measure, although it might be modified in several respects. But the administration will do everything it can to block the bill's passage.

DEMOCRAT TO THE END

— That Lyndon Johnson was a fierce partisan is well known. But this story by Mary A. Benjamin in the house magazine of the firm of Walter R. Benjamin Autographs shows that he was even a stauncher Democrat than most people thought.

Miss Benjamin writes that during the Kennedy administration President Kennedy started purchasing rare autograph and manuscripts from the firm for gifts to distinguished foreign visitors. This practice continued into the Johnson administration.

One day the White House called and said that British diplomat Sir Alexander Douglas Hume would be visiting and President Johnson wanted to make him a gift of an appropriate autograph. Did she have any suggestions?

Miss Benjamin thought a moment and was struck with a brilliant idea. The date of the visit, Feb. 11, was only one day before the patriotic holiday celebrations that would take place on Feb. 12. Abraham Lincoln's autograph, of course!

"Uh, uh, won't do," said the White House voice.

"Why not," asked Miss Benjamin.

"Mr. Lincoln was a Republican," the White House replied, ending the matter once and for all.

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OUT IN THE COLD—Many employees with excepted—non-civil service—status who have been caught in Defense reductions-in-force complain they are ineligible for the displaced career employee program.

The program is designed to find other government jobs for displaced federal workers, but does not include employees in excepted positions.

These employees contend that their special skills were urgently needed when they were brought into the government as excepted employees, so as to avoid the time-consuming process of competitive civil service exams. Therefore, they say, they should be given the same rights as displaced employees with career status in securing other federal jobs.